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Immediate Release

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Environment, Health Departments Issue Smoke Advisory

(Santa Fe, NM) — The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) and the New Mexico Department of Health (DOH) today issued a health advisory for areas of New Mexico affected by smoke from the California wildfires and urge residents to minimize their exposure to smoke.

The Department of Health recommends that sensitive groups, such as the elderly, small children, or any individual with respiratory or heart problems, leave the area where the smoke levels are within the unhealthy range (see table below) until the smoke dissipates or stay inside as much as possible. Citizens are also urged not to use swamp coolers as they will pull the smoke inside.

Air quality conditions associated with smoke are especially important for people with underlying health conditions such as asthma, emphysema, and cardiovascular disease. If symptoms associated with these pre-existing conditions do not respond to your usual recommended medications, see a health care provider immediately.

NMED's Air Quality Bureau operates six continuous particulate matter monitors in the State of New Mexico. These monitors are located in Taos, Santa Fe and Carlsbad as well as three in Dona Ana County. Readings from these monitors indicate that particulate matter suspended in the air is in the 20 micrograms per cubic meter range. While this does not meet the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's criteria for poor air quality, NMED and DOH do feel that sensitive groups should practice caution until the smoke dissipates. It is also possible that readings could be higher in other areas where monitors are not present.

In areas without real-time particulate monitors, visibility can serve as a good surrogate in determining air quality. The following chart includes guidelines for extrapolating air quality from observed visibility.

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Categories	Visibility in Miles	Particulate levels (averaged 1 hour, *u*g/m^3)
Good	10 miles and up	0 - 40
Moderate	6 to 9	41 - 80
Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	3 to 5	81 - 175
Unhealthy	1 1/2 to 2 ½	176 - 300
Very Unhealthy	1 to 1 ¼	301 - 500
Hazardous	3/4 mile or less	over 500

Procedure for Making Personal Observation to Determine Smoke Concentrations

- Face away from the sun
- Determine the limit of your visibility range by looking for targets at known distances (miles). Visible range is that point at which even the high contrast objects totally disappear
- After determining visibility in miles, use the chart to determine health effect and appropriate cautionary statement.

For further information on smoke, go to NMED's Web page: http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/aqb/Wildfire-PM.html, or contact Jon Goldstein, Communications Director, NMED at (505) 827-0314.

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